

## "THE IRISH IN BRITAIN"

## contents

DESERTED WIVES . . . . .	2
LONDON LETTER . . . . .	2
LOVE'S LABOUR LOST . . . . .	3
A VERY DISTURBING CASE . . . . .	3
YOU'LL NEVER GO BACK NOW . . . . .	4-5
NATIONAL IDENTITY KIT . . . . .	6
THE LIMERICK SOVIET . . . . .	7
CHRISTMAS ECHO . . . . .	8
THE MONTH'S MIND . . . . .	8



HELP! DON'T LEAVE US BEHIND

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## ECUMENISM LIMERICK STYLE

I understand that 25 years ago there were 1,500 Protestants residing in Limerick. Today there are approximately 700. During this 25 year period I am told that in the same city some 300 mixed marriages have taken place between members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities and that in practically every case the children born to such issue have been and are being reared as Roman Catholics. . . .

This state of affairs undoubtedly affords deep, if quiet satisfaction to many in the south of Ireland. To others it is the greatest of tragedies. To the Northern Protestant it equifirms his deep and instinctive fears of the repressive and dominating nature of the Roman Catholic Church and will be the reason for his continuing to hold blindly to what he has. Looking at what is happening to his co-religionists in the south makes him feel his very existence is at stake. This. . . is one of the root causes of the ghastly situation in the North.

(D. F. Wann [Rev.], 'Irish Times' 6/1/73)

part one

## DESERTED WIVES

by John Boyle

A social problem that has been largely buried in the complacent deeply conservative, religious-centred society that was and still largely is the distinguishing mark of Southern Ireland and that only lately has begun to demand the attention is the national scandal of the plight of the several thousands of the deserted or otherwise poorly-supported wives.

The subject was given the usual *Late Late Show* treatment on the Saturday before Christmas. By this is meant that it was given a short time slot and was approached in a highly emotional, "sensationalistic", fashion. Two women were, of their own volition, placed behind a screen, these were two live victims.

On the panel were Nuala Fennell, an ex-Women's Libber who left when she perceived that the movement might possess some liberal potential (in her view "politics" ought not to be the concern of Women's Liberationists); a young Law Lecturer from U.C.D., O'Reilly by name; a social worker with the I.S.P.C.C., Catherine O'Doherty, and an articulate, middle-class, deserted wife, sufficiently courageous and mature that she felt no need for anonymity (her name was Angela Burdick).

The format briefly was that the two hidden sufferers detailed their case histories, amidst interjections and expressions of concern and sympathy from the panellists, Gay Byrne and one or two of the planted members of the audience.

This was no way to approach a highly complex socio-historical-religious problem, unique almost in the peculiarly heightened form in which it presents itself in Ireland. The first fundamental error was Gay Byrne's who - with an eye on the ratings, of course, - choose to place the two women in a position where emotionalism and sheer personal frustrations were bound to gain precedence over any rational debate. (One of the screened-off women seemed especially neurotic, or at least very bitter - which, of

# LONDON LETTER

by Brendan Ryan

The Emerald Isle has been big news here recently. As you can doubtless imagine events in Dublin have been greeted with a great deal of cynical amusement by British punters. A terrorist force is succumbed in the south for over two years then, two well-placed bombs in Dublin, and we have Jack Lynch riding out like Torquemada at the head of the Grand Inquisition. The spectacle (unedifying as *The Spectator* called it) of the past and present Archbishops of Dublin falling over each other in a desperate bid to bless John Stephenson usefully served to destroy some of the illusions the institutional Roman Catholic Church in the Republic likes to perpetuate about itself. Neither did the Rev. MacManus calling on O'Connell Street crowds to say the Rosary in the name of Christ and Sean Mac Stiofain, do much to assist the best interests of the "One True Church".

Of course the repression of the *Media* did not go unnoticed here. There was a lot of debate over it, particularly by people in the trade. Regrettably, most people believe that Southern Ireland is totally hidebound and 'priest-ridden', with political reaction that there was no large scale wave of sympathy. The prospect of Lynch at last cracking down on the IRA was enough for most people.

The apparent support for the "Provos" manifested by the Irish Catholic Church has caused their co-religionists here a bit of embarrassment. The more responsible Catholic Press here was deluged with anti-Irish protests:

course, is scarcely a surprise, but was not at all conducive towards promoting a less heated discussion of the topic).

In the second instance the panel were not notably equipped to deal with the roots of the question. The social worker was a typical representative of the worried middle classes, fresh out of university with a thesis on the environmental pressures upon delinquent children (no doubt), she appeared well-intentioned and concerned for the plight of deserted wives, but her very training served to inhibit a more fundamental appraisal of the springs of the problem.

The Law Lecturer seemed to think that he was doing his bit by pointing out the more fundamental absurdities in law which prevent a deserted wife from being treated like a human being.

The legal code essentially contrived to make the deserted wife an unrecognised entity. In a society which does not permit divorce (a purely accidental law, this, and nothing at all to do with the now deleted recognition of the special position of Mother Church!), desertion, even at the best, is an impermanent state, the presumption always being that the departed spouse may return at any time. At least in "pagan" societies a husband seeking divorce is compelled in law to pay an alimony to the wife, but in Catholic Ireland, of course, there are no such things as deserted wives, so the problem just doesn't arise. (That, at any rate, is the presumed rationale of the official thinking on the matter). It was further pointed out that a wife, in the Irish context, is much better off if her husband dies rather than if

Why are couples using contraceptives refused Communion when admitted murderers willfully bent on suicide are not?

Wouldn't Belfast priests be better employed practising and preaching the injunction to love Thine Enemy' in their own city rather than touring America denigrating the young British soldiers who are dying in the streets trying to save their community from destruction? Do the antics of the Archbishop(s) of Dublin indicate that the Church believes in the dismembering and maiming of Belfast shoppers as an essential prerequisite of the creation of the Kingdom on Earth?

Unfortunately, the cynicism is hardening into a measure of anti-Irish feeling. Some of the old prejudices are being revived.

The average Englishman is not anti-Ireland. However, whilst the search for national and cultural identity in Ireland, is locked within a straitjacket of reactionary, uncharitable prejudice, there is little hope of improving community relations in Ireland or persuading the English that Ireland is worth taking seriously.

Conor Cruise O'Brien's grim prophecy that Ireland will become two wretched little Balkanised states ruled by the Hibernian equivalent of two Greek Colonels' juntas, seems, remorsefully, to be becoming true. The "plague on both your houses" attitude of many of the British people is understandable but unhelpful. It is difficult to see light or sanity coming to bear on the conflict in the immediate future.

he leaves her (she can always claim some portion of his estate). The logic of the position for Irish wives who fear that their husbands are in danger of leaving them high and dry would seem to reduce itself to the proposition that they plan the perfect murder in an attempt to make the law treat them favourably.

Nuala Fennell was just symptomatic of the impotent nature of the usual Irish "do-gooder". She is running some sort of advisory service for deserted wives, (AIM), which in a sense helps to give the State some breathing space, but is just doing no good in taking positive measures against this social ill.

The other member of the panel, Mrs. Burdick, was honest enough to admit that her social status was such that she could borrow money from friends at difficult times, and that furthermore, she is seen to have an independent source of income as an author. She was not, in other words, a typical example of the deserted wife, though she was a clear-headed guide to the inhumanity of a social welfare system, which under the Home Assistance regulations, considers 90p per week to be sufficient to clothe, feed and provide shelter for a child of an abandoned wife.

(continued on page 6)

### JOKE OF THE MONTH

"One of the greatest myths in Ireland is that of the Church's influence on Government

(Dep. S. Coughlan, *Limerick Leader* 16/12/72)

## LOVE'S LABOUR LOST

Many people were eagerly awaiting the publication of last year's Annual Report of the Limerick Social Service Centre. The report, it was believed, would contain the answer to one of the biggest local mysteries of 1972. But, alas, the case of the mysterious missing money remains unsolved. The "wallet of notes" has not yet found its way to the Social Service Centre.

To jog the complacent conscience: the "wallet of notes" was presented to Philip Dundon, on Wednesday 27th April, last year, to mark the departure of the ex-member of the St. Mary's branch of the Labour Party. With due pomp and ceremony, the story, complete with picture, was dutifully reported by the *Limerick Leader*. With visions of a wallet crammed full of crispy "notes", Dundon quickly opened the packet to find to his astonishment that it contained, a letter from Fianna Fail seeking funds for the E.E.C. referendum.

The twist to the story came when the philanthropic Dundon wrote from London requesting Coughlan to donate the notes to the Limerick Social Service Centre.....unfortunately the Centre's balance Sheet contains no mention of this altruistic deed.

So Coughlan's appreciation in hard cash terms of Dundon's "great loss to Limerick and the Labour Party" remains unknown. What Dundon, from his vantage point in London, now thinks of the hoax played on him is not recorded.

## find the 'wallet of notes' contest



*Picture, published in the 'Limerick Leader' on 6th May 1972, shows Dundon being presented with a "wallet of notes" by Coughlan. The "wallet" was later found to be a packet containing a letter from Fianna Fail seeking EEC referendum funds.*

# a very disturbing case

by sean bourke

Here in the 26 Counties there is no shortage of moral indignation when it comes to the brutality of the R.U.C. and the British Army. And quite rightly so. But should we not put our own house in order first? Are our own police (euphemistically called Civic Guards) any more humane than the police on the other side of the Border?

Consider the disturbing case of the brothers Joseph and Mathew Fogarty of Garryowen, Limerick, and their friend, Martin O'Meara, who appeared in the Central Criminal Court in Dublin recently.

These three young men were apprehended in the yard of a flour mill by a number of Gardai and were arrested. By the time the three arrested men had reached William Street Barracks they were in need of a total of 79 stitches between them. The Gardai were uninjured. And yet, incredible though it may sound, the three accused were convicted of assaulting the *guards!* And the proceeds of their daring raid on the flour mill? A knife and fork valued at 35 pence!

Garda Michael Hynes stated that he was first into the yard and saw a head up high towards the roof. He called on him to come down and Joseph Fogarty did so.

Garda Patrick Kileen stated that he saw two men on the roof of Keane's warehouse. A number of other

Gardai arrived and two men were apprehended in Roche's flour mill next door. Mathew Fogarty, he said, came rushing out of the darkness and a fight started. Witness was kicked and punched by Mat Fogarty and he hit Fogarty a few times on the head and shoulders with his baton.

Garda Oliver Stapleton said that Fogarty came charging out of the darkness swinging what appeared to be an iron bar. He hit Fogarty about *ten times* on the head, body and legs with his baton.

Dr. John Pulte, Barrington's Hospital, Limerick, told the court that Mathew Fogarty required 28 stitches to his scalp when he was brought to the hospital by the Gardai. The whole skin of his scalp was split in two. There were bruises on his back and he had injuries to his shoulder and elbow.

Mathew Fogarty in evidence, said that he "got a terrific beating" from Gardai, which necessitated several X-rays. He did not strike or resist the Gardai, but they struck him numerous times, he said.

Joseph Fogarty said he was punched in the face by a Garda and fell to the ground. While on the ground he was kicked in the ribs and legs. As a result of this he required 18 stitches to his head. Martin O'Meara stated that he was hiding on the roof and came out when he heard Joe Fogarty screaming, "stop it". He (O'Meara) shouted, "stop it, there's

no call for it". He was then struck in the face and a Garda struck him with a baton in the lower part of his back. O'Meara said he was taken to hospital later that night and had to get 33 stitches.

Mr. Kevin O'Higgins, defending, said that the reason the case went to the Central Criminal Court was that charges and allegations he had to make were of such a serious nature that it was felt they should be heard in the open rather than be hushed-up or hidden. *He asked could it be that these charges were brought to protect the Gardai.* Mr. O'Higgins said they had heard the Gardai say that they thought knives were out, yet the accused were not charged with possessing a weapon. And there was no allegation by any of the Gardai that they were struck by anything other than a fist.

Mr. O'Higgins concluded: *This seems to be a most unlikely charge.*

It should be noted that these three young men were convicted by a jury, and that the property qualification attaching to jury service in this country ensures that the *haves* will always sit in judgement over the *have nots*. The property-owning jury will always find it easier to identify with the police rather than with the victims of police brutality.

# YOU'LL NEVER GO BACK

REVIEW by JIM KEMMY

## 'THE IRISH IN BRITAIN'

by KEVIN O'CONNOR

# NOW

*The Irish in Britain* traces the history of Irish emigration to Britain from the twelfth century to the present day. Little space is wasted on the period from the twelfth to the nineteenth century and author Kevin O'Connor manages to telescope this section into a mere four pages. We learn that as far back as 1243, emigration was a common feature of life between the two islands and in that year a statute was invoked in Britain for the deportation of Irish Beggars.

By 1800, the emigration pattern was well established. The flow reached its peak after the potatoe blight and famine of 1846 and 1847. Hunger and disease killed one million Irish People, and half of the other million who fled came to Britain. The refugees scrambled desperately for the dirty and dangerous jobs at the bottom of the industrial ladder. In *Industry and Empire*, E. J. Hobsbawm wrote:

*Their wages were lower than anyone else's, they lived in the worst slums, and the English and Scots despised them as semi-barbarians, distrusted them as Catholics and hated them as undercutters of their wages. Apart from their language (if they happened no longer to be Irish-speaking), they brought nothing with them which would have enabled them to make more sense of nineteenth-century England or Scotland than of China. They came as members of a pauperized, degraded peasantry whose own native society had been crushed by some centuries of English oppression into fragments of old custom, mutual aid and kinship solidarity, held together by a generically Irish way of life (wakes, songs and so on), by a hatred of England and by a Catholic priesthood of peasants' sons and brothers.*

Kevin O'Connor tells us that by 1871, over 800,000 Irish people lived in the Little Irelands of Britain, and that most of these ghettos were shunned by "respectable" citizens; even the police entered only in numbers. In *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, a vivid description of one of Manchester's Little Irelands is given by Engels:

*The lack of cleanliness, which is not so injurious in the country, where population is scattered, and which is the Irishman's second nature, becomes terrifying and gravely dangerous through its concentration here in the great cities. The Milesian deposits all garbage and filth before his house door here, as he was accustomed to do at home, and so accumulates the pools and dirt-heaps which disfigure the working people's quarters and poison the air. He builds a pig-sty against the house wall as he did at home, and if he is prevented from doing this, he lets the pig sleep in the room with himself . . . The Irishman loves his pig as the Arab his horse, with the difference that he sells it when it is*

*fat enough to kill. Otherwise, he eats and sleeps with it, his children play with it, ride upon it, roll in the dirt with it, as anyone may see a thousand times repeated in all the great towns of England. . . . At home in his mud-cabin there was only one room for all domestic purposes; more than one room his family does not need in England. . . . Drink is the only thing which makes the Irishman's life worth having, drink and his cheery temperament; so he revels in drink to the point of the most bestial drunkenness. The southern facile character of the Irishman, his crudity, which places him but little above the savage, his contempt for all humane enjoyments, in which his very crudeness makes him incapable of sharing his filth and poverty all favour drunkenness. The temptation is great, he cannot resist it, and so when he has money he gets rid of it down his throat. What else should he do? How can society blame him when it places him in a position in which he almost of necessity becomes a drunkard; when it leaves him to himself, to his savagery?*

As the emigrants swarmed into the slums, Irish priests soon followed on. O'Connor describes the influence of the priests over the emigrants; *Overall the priests were the most powerful individuals, being political as well as religious leaders of the settlements. The priests, by their academic training and by the nature of the tribal offices they held, served as liaison officers between the ghettos and the outside world. Looked up to with mystical and superstitious awe, called upon to arbitrate upon disagreements and to quell disturbances. . . . As the visiting French writer Faucher noted: "Police arrangements would be quite inefficient among the Irish, unless supported by "ghostly" influence."*

O'Connor quotes a contemporary description of one of the priests: *He had powdered hair, a white cravat, knee-breeches, black stockings and silver-buckled shoes. . . . being a tall and powerfully built man his appearance at once commanded respect and admiration. He settled disputes among his people by his very presence, or where that failed, with the threat of a heavy stick which was the regular companion of his visits among them.*

E. P. Thompson in *The Making of the Irish Working Class* comments:

*When the Irish poor came to England, the priesthood used every means—devoted ministrations (with a knowledge of the mind of their parishioners which no English clergy could equal), psychological terror, financial aid and financial extortion, pressure on relatives, comfort in distress—to maintain their hold on their flock; and they trusted to the only form of evangelism likely to succeed in Protestant England: the birth rate. English coalwhippers, navvies or costermongers were, many of them 'heathens'; their Irish analogues attended Mass. The priest was the only authority to whom whom the Irish labourers showed any deference. A Catholic Canon could quell a Saturday night riot in Britain where the magistrates failed. When Mayhew accompanied one priest on the round of his flock: "Everywhere the people ran out to meet him. . . . Women crowded to their door-steps, and came creeping up from the cellars through the trap-doors, merely to courtesy to him. . . . Even as the priest walked along the street, boys running at full speed would pull up to touch their hair. . . ." Indeed for the many of the migrants the power of the priest increased. Torn up by their roots, the priest was the last point of orientation with their old way of life. Literate but not far removed in social class, free from identification with English employers and authorities, sometimes knowing the Gaelic, the priest passed more frequently between England and Ireland, brought news of home and sometimes of relatives, could be entrusted with remittances, savings or messages. Hence it followed that the most enduring cultural tradition which the Irish peasantry brought—to the third and the fourth generation—into England was that of a semi-feudal nationalist Church. In the most squalid cellars there might still be found some of the hocus-pocus of Romanism, the candlesticks, the crucifix, and the 'showy-coloured prints of saints and martyrs' alongside the print of O'Connell the 'Liberator'.*

In a letter dated November 20, 1868 Engels spoke of the 'hatred towards the Irish found among the English workers'. But this hatred did not spill over into violent action except on a few rare occasions, notably at Gorebridge and Stockport, where pitched battles and serious rioting occurred. In the overall situation, however, it is difficult to disagree with E. P. Thompson when he concluded: *'and it is not the friction but the relative ease with which the Irish were absorbed into working-class communities which is remarkable'.*

The I.R.A.'s bombing campaign fiasco during the Second World War is also considered. The post-war building boom in Britain, and the strikes at the Shell Building at the South Bank complex in London are cited as an example of Irish working class militancy. Brian Behan was obviously one of the author's main advisers in this section and Behan's recollections appear to be more 'lyrical' than political. O'Connor writes:

*The significance of the South Bank strike in Irish terms was that it characterized the 'diffusion' of the fifties, i.e. the moving from the strait-jacketed immigrant mentality of regarding themselves as mere economic fodder with no function other than that of a passive work-force. The trade union militancy of Irish workers was in part the product of disillusion with the administration in Ireland which had failed to provide employment in Ireland—all through the fifties the surplus of unem-*

played rarely fell below 40,000 a year and the 'dole' offered the magnificent weekly sum of thirty-four shillings.

Experience has shown that while sporadic, isolated strikes, such as South Bank and the Barbican of 1967, can sometimes gain short-term concessions, their long-term benefits are open to question unless the political consciousness of the workers is raised during the struggle. Despite the exodus of 400,000 Irish people during the 'hungry' fifties, even the fundamental question of 'Why emigration?' has all too rarely been asked by the vast majority of the workers in condemned exile. Irish building workers in Britain are not noted for their interest in working class unity, or even in supporting modest trade union demands. Most of them are not even members of unions, and they continue to be exploited by McAlpine, Wimpey and by their fellow-Irish contractors.

Irish building workers in Britain (like their counterparts at home) all too often display a narrow, inward-looking cult of countyism rather than a sense of class awareness. This shows itself in petty rivalries on the level of catch-cries such as 'Up Galway', 'How's she Cuttin' Cavan' and 'Mayo, God Help Us'. Donall Mac Amhlaigh describes this, as well as the drunkenness and the brawling in pubs, building sites and dance halls in his book *An Irish Navy*. He laments about the tragedy of 'seeing the little groups of Irish walking aimlessly around town every Sunday evening with no interest in anything at all—the creatures—only waiting for the pubs to open.'

In the third part of the book, *The Irish Now*, eight organizations 'which attempt to "politicalize" the Irish in Britain in relation to Ulster' are listed. No mention is made here of the British and Irish Communist Organization (founded in London in 1966), the first working class body to put forward a democratic solution to the Northern Ireland conflict based on the reality of the two nations. O'Connor in this section, sums up the present-day positions of the Irish in Britain:

*The pressures of history dictate that they be cautious and conservative. Any guilt-feelings they may have about 'Old Ireland' can be quickly allayed by a trip home and the dramatic contrast between the range of opportunities available to them in their own homeland compared with those available in Britain. . . . Only a tiny portion of those settled—around five thousand—return in any one year. . . . They of 'the middle nation' embody the tenet that the first responsibility of the Irish in Britain is to the Irish in Britain. . . . They have no desire to fly a tri-colour over Camden Town, and though the pay ritual lip-service to flying one over Belfast they will not do much to aid that fluttering.*

Some 'hairy' stories about the building industry crop up. One tale is patently untrue. O'Connor writes: *In the London-Irish dance halls of the Blitz a cheer would sometimes break out upon the fall of a nearby bomb, not for any reason of racial animosity, but rather for the prospect of building work on the marrow.* The bizarre picture of Irish building workers cheering as London burned is merely the figment of a sick but colourful imagination.

Some disturbing facts are disclosed: *Between 1950 and 1960, the contribution of the Irish to violent crime in London rose from 9.7 per cent*

*to 12.2 per cent—yet they formed only 2 to 3 per cent of the population. . . . Irish-born from the Republic accounted for 12 percent of the prison population of England, Scotland and Wales. . . . In 1966, a study undertaken in Birmingham demonstrated that the Irish were responsible for: 23 per cent of violent crime; 20 per cent of property offences; 17 per cent of offences of prostitution; 60 per cent of offences of drunkenness. . . . a study of London's 'Skid Row' showed that the Irish formed 37 per cent of the sample studied. . . . Irish born patients accounted for three-quarters of all European immigrants attending British clinics for the treatment of venereal diseases in 1962.*

While Kevin O'Connor does state that *It could be argued that the traditional policies of the Catholic Church, in areas of education and family planning are partially responsible for problems among emigrants*, he also writes: *Thus in the past decade the social and settlement problems among the Irish have been tackled in the main by the Irish themselves. Most of the credit is due to the Irish Hierarchy, a body which rarely finds itself the object of praise from social scientists.* It is difficult to know how O'Connor arrived at the conclusion. Despite Fr. Eamonn Casey's housing activities, the £¼ million raised by the Hierarchy at church door collection in Ireland to be used for the building of 'Irish Centres' in Britain and the work of the Federation of Irish Societies, these achievements are infinitesimal when compared to the work of British state welfare services and even the work of other religious organizations for Irish emigrants. A once-a-year visit on St. Patrick's Day by an Irish Government Minister to the much-publicized Camden Town Irish Centre is designed to give a rosy impression of 'all the wonderful work' being done for the emigrants; but around the corner in the nearest Rowtown House or Salvation Army Hostel far more forgotten Irishmen are 'housed'. Kevin O'Connor himself tells us that the number of 55 treatment beds for alcoholics maintained by the Irish-Catholic agencies is minute (2½%) when compared to the Salvation Army's 2,100 (25%) in London alone.

The value of the 'community structures' set up by middle-class, half-polished Paddies is over-emphasised by the author. One estimate compiled by the Irish Embassy in London showed that less than 5% of all the Irish in Britain are currently members of Irish organisations and the vast majority of these are in sporting clubs.

And how was all this emigration viewed at home? Mr. Alex Fitzgerald, a member of the Government-sponsored commission, 'On Emigration and other Population Problems, 1948-'54', echoed much of the prevailing attitude of Church and State: 'High emigration. . . releases social tensions which would otherwise explode and makes possible a stability of manners and customs which would otherwise be subject to radical change. . . . It is clear that in the history of the Catholic Church, the role of Irish emigrants has been significant. In the order of values it seems more important to preserve and improve the quality of Irish life and therefore the purity of that message which our people have communicated to the World, than it is to reduce the numbers of Irish emigrants'.

O'Connor drily but correctly comments: 'Those published remarks in 1953 were doubtless of immense

*consolation to the 33,000 emigrants who left Ireland that year and who were, for the most part, unwilling economic deportees. As they trudged off the mailboats which berthed daily at Holyhead, their sense of abandonment must indeed have been lightened by the knowledge that their departure thus maintained 'the purity of that message which our people have communicated to the World'.*

During these years, emigration was seen as part of a divine plan for the 'conversion' of 'pagan' Britain. The prevailing dream-like attitude led some people in the Irish Catholic Church to believe that this conversion was just around the corner. With the Irish-born numbering about one million, or two per cent of the total population of Britain, the plan to 'recover' the 'lost' forty-odd million was, of course, never 'on'.

However, a more limited objective was announced by the Catholic Bishops of Ireland in their pastoral of 7th July, 1955: 'It has been arranged by the Irish Hierarchy with His Eminence (Cardinal Griffin) and the Hierarchy of England and Wales, that the missions given by Irish missionaries to Irish-born Catholics in England and Wales be further developed and co-ordinated. . . that Fr. Aedan McGrath of the Maynooth Mission to China should go to England and Wales to foster the apostolic spirit among our people there through the Legion of Mary and its auxiliary association, the Patricians. . . . A task force of 11 young Irish priests sent to serve as chaplains at building camps throughout Britain as part of the 'new development'. The main aim of the campaign was less ambitious than the conversion of Britain: it concerned itself chiefly with ensuring that Irish building workers in these camps did not pick up any left-wing ideas.

Fr. McGrath made this attitude clear in an article in *The Furrow* (September 1959). He describes Cardinal Griffin's advice as to how best to influence the apparently child-like Irish emigrants: 'Don't scold them, don't try to frighten them. . . . tell them that we the Bishops of England need them.' He further stated: 'Another reason for starting the Patricians was the deliberate approach made by the Communist and Connolly Associations to the Irish emigrants in England and the consequent dangers for England and Ireland.' Another priest, Fr. Eamonn Gaynor, writing in the same magazine from High Marnham Power Station, near Newark, Notts., on the work of the Camp Chaplain Scheme, supported this strategy: 'we might mention too that the *line* of the Irish Communists is that the priests can have no sympathy with the workers, not knowing anything of their conditions of life. Now it is not necessary for priests to live in Camps to give the lie to that *line*. But the Camp Chaplain Scheme will surely cause them to revise their *line*.'

But at least one Irish labourer in an earlier period did not welcome the attention of missionaries. Patrick MacGill in his semi-autobiographical novel, *Children of the Dead End* (this book and its author are ignored in *The Irish in Britain*) deals with the relationship between workers, missions and the Church under Capitalism:

*I also looked upon the mission with disgust. . . . The Church allows a criminal commercial system to continue and wastes its time trying to save the souls of the victims of the system. Christianity*

continued on page 6

08914

## YOU'LL NEVER GO BACK NOW continued from page 5

preaches contentment to wage-slaves, and hobnobs with the slave drivers; therefore the Church is a betrayer of the people. The Church soothes those who are rolled and never condemns the robber, who is usually a pillar of Christianity. To me the Church presents something unattainable, which, being out of harmony with my spiritual condition, jars rather than soothes. To me the industrial system is a great fraud, and the Church which does not condemn it is unfaithful and unjust to the working people. I detest missions, whether organized for the betterment of South Sea Islanders or unshaven navvies. A missionary canvasses the working classes for their souls just in the same manner as a town councillor canvasses them for their votes. I have heard of workers' missions, railway missions, navvies' missions, and missions to poor heathens, but I have never yet heard of missions for the uplifting of M.P.s, or for the betterment of stock exchange gamblers; and these people need saving grace a great deal more than the poor untutored working men. But it is in the nature of things that piety should preach to poverty on its shortcomings, and forget that even wealth may have sins of its own. Clergymen dine nowadays with the gamblers who rob the working classes. Christ used the lash on the gamblers in the Temple.

The fact that Connolly and Larkin were born in British shums is noted. The author also mentions the walk of the leader of Chartism, Fergus O'Connor, but omits Bronterre O'Brien, the chief ideologist of that movement. Other notable omissions

include John Doherty and Michael Davitt. The fact that an Irishman, Jim Connell, wrote 'The Red Flag', the anthem of the British labour movement, and that another wrote the best British working class novel, 'The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists', does not merit mention. Assessing the contribution of Irish emigrants, James Connolly in the 'Labour in Irish History' wrote:

*In general the effect upon the English Labour movement of the great influx of Irish workers seems to us to have been beneficial. It is true that their competition for employment had at first a seriously evil effect upon wages, but, on the other hand, a study of the fugitive literature of the movement of the time shows that the working class Irish exiles were present and active in the ranks of militant Labour in numbers out of all proportion to the ratio they bore to the population at large. And always they were the advanced, the least compromising, the most irreconcilable element in the movement.*

From a socialist standpoint, Kevin O'Connor's main flaw is the uncritical manner in which he holds up the transplanted gombeen men and 'master lumpers' as examples to their fellow-Irishmen of men who 'made good'. Their sharp practices and exploitation of their own countrymen in competing successfully against British capitalists are all too often ignored, and even lauded in some cases. But despite its shortcomings and omissions, *The Irish in Britain* is a useful and readable contribution to the literature of emigration.

## Deserted Wives (continued from page 2)

This princely sum is the maximum entitlement to which deserted wives can lay claim to during the first six months of their "separation" from their husband (presumably the official suspicion is that the claim is an elaborate hoax, and will be exposed with the return of the absent partner to the love nest).

The programme failed because it did not provide any explanation of the phenomenon of deserted wives, either by way of sketching in the social class and background of the deserted spouses, or by attempting to come to grips with the factors - religious, legal, emotional, etc. - in Irish society which give rise to the tragedy of broken families.

Mr. O'Reilly, as was indicated, seemed to delight in detailing the more comic aspects of the legal situation of the deserted wives (e.g. the fairly widely-known impotence of the legal machinery of the State to stretch across the Irish Sea with a view to compelling the errant spouse to contribute to the maintenance of his wife and offspring), but was notably weak in propounding solutions adequate to tackle the issues involved.

It can scarcely be regarded as surprising that such was the case, as someone with a vested interest in perpetuating a needlessly complicated, obscurantist, class-conscious state institution, is hardly the person

most likely to favour ideas which might cut through the waffle and present the law for what it is - a superstructure of inherited prejudices, ideas about the preordained order of things, presumptions of the worth of the makers of that society which bear no relation to the reality of the case. Capitalist law is ultimately a system of fairly basic tenets designed to perpetuate the rule of one class, in this matter by freeing the male head of the family from any actual responsibility to his dependents by placing him out of the reach of the law so as best to pursue his function in bourgeois society, whether it be as a classical accumulator of wealth or, more likely, as a selfish, reactionary element among the mass of the work force.

It is noteworthy, indeed, and typical of the primitive bourgeois stage of present-day Irish society that few, if any, serious reforms have as yet been effected in the ongoing social process that is transforming the Twenty-Six County State from a community of peasant proprietors into a fully paid-up member of the advanced capitalists' club. The reason is simply that social democracy (never mind socialism) has not yet gained a strong foothold even among the intellectuals, who are still largely suffused in their religious ardour of Republicanism.

(to be continued)

### WHEN SILENCE IS GOLDEN

"On the question of the £190 a week expenses . . . the Taoiseach referred to Mr. Herbert from Lisnagry."  
(*Limerick Weekly Echo* 6/1/73)

## NATIONAL IDENTITY KIT

Much of the emergent political strains in English society were mirrored in Ireland, with one salient difference. Whereas in England the new feudal structure of the industrially new rich had produced the simmering discontents of left-wing socialism, in Ireland the more rebellious philosophies were directed *nationalistically*. Whereas in England these forces found expression through the formation of the Labour Party, opposed to the indigenous ruling class, in Ireland the same dissident attitudes were directed against a ruling class which happened to be English in its manifestations and personnel. Whereas in England the movers of the new socialism were scornful of the social habits and moves of the 'ruling class', so in Ireland were the formulators of similar reaction scornful of similar characteristics, which were most simply seen as manifestations of *English rule*.

Accordingly, the creators of Ireland's reactionary equivalent to the British radical resentment formulated a caste of Gaelic Ireland attitudes. The ancient books of legend and folk-lore were plundered for manifestations of an exclusive Irish culture.

Any symbol imagined to native Irish was 'in', everything symbolic of the English/Anglo Saxon was 'out'. The movement became known as the Gaelic Revival, and like most such obsessions, was initially developed by middle-class cultural enthusiasts—of whom one, Douglas Hyde, was to become the first President of the Irish Free State—who ranged wide (and sometimes ridiculous) in their search for symbols which might awaken the peasantry to 'their true destiny'. The peasantry initially reacted with scepticism to the urban obsessives who came among them, sometimes dressed in cassocks and headbands and crossed leggings which they fondly imagined to have been the attire of ancient Irish heroes of mythology. A concept of racial Irish purity was preached by devotees such as Constance Gore-Booth and Douglas Hyde, themselves of Anglo-Saxon landed ancestry. A relic of the monastic Middle Ages, the Ardagh Chalice, became the model for an athletic prize, to be competed for by exponents of 'Gaelic Games'.

Under such bizarre tutelage, the movement nevertheless flourished. The Gaelic Athletic Association, set up to foster contests 'racy to the soil' flourished in an atmosphere of discovered nationalism. No member of the British Crown Forces (military) or of the Royal Irish Constabulary (which consisted mainly of Irishmen) were allowed to participate in its contests, a rule which still applies in Northern Ireland. Douglas, who claimed to dream in Gaelic, was to found the Gaelic League . . . Many of those who baptized the new state in cordite were graduates of Constance Gore-Booth's Fianna Eireann boy scouts, militantly modelled on the mythological Fianna.

continued on facing page

The debate at the annual conference of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress continued. Mr. O'Connell, the Limerick delegate of the Irish Clerical Workers' Union, who had earlier complained about the lack of support for the Limerick strike, returned to the debate. He said "he wished to make it clear that he was not associated with what were going around. He did his part at that strike and knowing as he did why the strike was let down."

Tom Johnson interjected: - "Tell us what that means".

O'Connell said "he made no definite charge. He believed that a Special Congress should have been held before the Executive went to Limerick".

William O'Brien, secretary, said "he wanted to know who was the somebody Mr. O'Connell has said let the Limerick strikers down".

O'Connell said "what he contended was that the delay of the Executive in going to Limerick allowed certain under-currents to get to work to sap and undermine the movement in Limerick".

Tom Johnson said "they did not know where Mr. O'Connell stood - whether he was intending to denounce the Executive or the people of Limerick, or whether he merely wanted to throw open the floodgates. He (Mr. Johnson) dissented from the tone adopted by speakers on both sides suggesting that the Limerick strike could have been won, or that strikes of this kind could be entered into with the expectation of winning. He disagreed with the view that the Limerick Committee should have waited to consult the National Executive. The Limerick Committee should have acted quickly if their action was to be of any effect. There were times when local people must take on themselves the responsibility of doing things and taking the consequences, and this, he asserted, was one of them. But when that action had been taken there must be due consideration given to any suggestion of an enormous extension of that action.

They could never win a strike by downing tools against the British army. But there was always the possibility in Ireland that aggressive action on this side might prompt aggressive action on the other side of the Channel. It was for them as an Executive to decide whether this was the moment to act in Ireland, whether there was a probability of a response in England and Scotland, and their knowledge of England and Scotland did not lead them to think that any big action in Ireland would have brought a responsive movement in those countries.

A general strike could have been legitimately called in Ireland on twelve occasions within the last two years. But it was not a question of justification. It was a question of strategy. Were they to take the enemy's time or were they to take their own? They knew that if the railwaymen came out the soldiers would have taken on the railways next day. They knew if the soldiers were put on the railways, the railways would have been blown up. They knew that would have meant armed revolt. Did they as Trade Unionists suggest that it was for their Executive to say such action should be taken at a particular time, knowing, assured as they were, that it would have resulted in armed revolt in Ireland. He believed it was quite possible that it would be by the action of the Labour movement in Ireland that insurrection would some day be developed. There might be occasion to decide on a down tools policy which would have the effect of calling out the armed forces of the Crown. But Limerick was not the occasion.

# THE LIMERICK SOVIET

by jim kemmy

PART 10

They went to Limerick with a definite proposition which, if adopted, would have had an effect in Ireland, England and America, which would have been of tremendous force and would not have cost a single life. Their proposal was that the men and women of Limerick, who, they believed were resolved and determined to sacrifice much for the cause they were fighting should evacuate their city and leave it an empty shell in the hands of the military. They had made arrangements for housing and feeding the people of Limerick if they agreed to the Executive's proposition. Many of the men of Limerick with whom they consulted were in favour of that proposition. The Executive then placed it before the local Committee, and having argued in favour of it left the matter in the Committee's hands. They decided against it. That was the last word. The Executive did not go to Limerick to take out of the hands of the Limerick Strike Committee the conduct of their own strike.

Let them remember what the strike was. It was a protest and the Limerick Committee emphasised the fact, against a military tyranny. They did not expect to beat the British Army. They intended to protest and their protest was effective; and they did the wise thing in the end. Rather than have one going back to-day and another to-morrow they called the strike off. He could say, as he said elsewhere that the people of Limerick deserved the highest praise and congratulations on the conduct of their work, on the organisation of their strike, on their willingness to obey the dictates of the Workers' Council, and on the power and organisation they showed.

They had done all that could have been done even had they had piles of money. Supposing they could have remained out for three months, what

## JOKE OF THE YEAR

"I don't need to tell you the defendant (Gerry Collins) is of good character."  
(Gordon Holmes, State Solicitor, defending the Minister for Justice, Limerick Leader 9/12/72)

## NATIONAL IDENTITY KIT

continued

Thus was a revolutionary movement in Ireland formed, fashioned and fired by recourse to malleable legend and appeal to concepts of racial nationhood revived from the embers of folklore memory which had survived successive conquests.

(The Irish in Britain by Kevin O'Connor)

would have happened? They would have resumed employment at the end of three months exactly as they did at the end of two weeks. A strike in the City of Limerick would not defeat the British Army. That was the central fact of the situation.

Their protest was an effective one and that was all that could be expected and that was all that was looked for. He hoped that the result of the Limerick strike would not deter another city from taking similar action in similar circumstances. It would have required £7,000 or £8,000 a week to keep Limerick above water if they had to pay for food, etc. There was no sign of any sufficient monetary response at the end of a fortnight. He granted the people of Ireland were behind the workers of Limerick in sentiment, but that sentiment must be expressed quickly in finance if such a strike was that of Limerick was to be carried on for any lengthened period. If there had been £10,000 a week coming in the end of the strike would have been the same. He maintained there was no one to blame for the failure, so-called, of the Limerick strike. It was no failure. Limerick did its work well and he thought, if they got his mind, no one would acknowledge it more readily than General Griffin. (Applause).

The Chairman T. Cassidy, Typographical Association, said his name had been brought into this discussion at the outset. What occurred in connection with his case was this. He was very busy at the time through Ireland and his General President was over assisting him. He, as a matter of fact, informed him (the Chairman) of the Limerick strike. Owing to their work though different parts of the country he had not received Mr. O'Brien's message regarding the meeting called in Dublin for Thursday. When he went to Dublin in preparation for their Easter Conference he met Mr. O'Brien who gave him all the information he had, and outlined what the National Executive proposed.

He (the Chairman) was determined to go to Limerick on the Tuesday. He did not ignore the permit system when it was necessary to have a permit for such business as was on hand. When his business was over on Monday, he received instructions from his Executive to proceed to Drogheda. Therefore, he did not go to Limerick on the Tuesday, although he had his permit for the journey in his pocket book. He considered the duties of his own Association should have his first thought. Furthermore, he was satisfied the National Executive had taken all the steps to assist the workers of Limerick in all the ways they possibly could.

He had full confidence in the Executive when going off on his own duties to Drogheda. He was satisfied too, that the men of Limerick were carrying out the ideas of the workers of Ireland. He was sorry Mr. Cronin was not present. He had received a letter from him that morning asking him to thank the people who nominated him for the Vice-Chairmanship. He considered it his duty to mention receipt of that letter. The contents of it, he was sorry to say, he could not read. He believed Mr. Cronin had gone too far in his explanation of his absence. There was a certain charge made in that letter, not in connection with the strike but in connection with other business, that he did not wish to put before the delegates.

The report as a whole was then submitted to the meeting and adopted, only one man, the silent and unknown Offaly Trades Council delegate, Smyth, casting a vote against it.

(to be continued)

08914

# CHRISTMAS ECHO

Maybe it was an uncharacteristic twinge on the *Limerick Weekly Echo's* capitalist conscience during the height of the Christmas orgy. Or it could have been a token effort to balance the seasonal advertising scales with a 'human interest' story. Whatever the motives, *Echo* readers found the following article, 'A Glimpse at a Past Christmas', included in a special red-coloured Christmas supplement.

"Christmas, and the ancient city of Limerick was cloaked in a new atmosphere of festive merriment as eminent citizens struggled through the crowded streets laden with expensive gifts. Christmas, and the drab walls of the Workhouse towered before three young and cold children. They were in a miserable condition and the gaily decorated windows of Merchant city Limerick were a world away.

"The fancy dress ball was success assured, owing to the very large number of tickets sold.

"On Thursday 22 December, a man of no-fixed residence was charged at the County Petty Sessions with deserting his three children and leaving them at the Workhouse. Evidence was given that the man was a habitual drunkard and had sent his children to beg on the streets of Limerick. The money they collected, he spent on drink.

"A sentence of one month's imprisonment with hard labour was imposed and 1897 Limerick snugly settled in to enjoy Christmas, having taken care of its obligations to the needy, after all, hadn't a most respected lady of the city given a £25 Christmas box to the evicted tenants of the Masserene Estate.

"So the cold descended on the city failing to freeze the fleeting happiness of luxury and adding only to the deprivation of the underprivileged. Whilst those who could afford it gorged themselves on excellent oysters, famous for their nutritious quality and delicious flavour, the poor and those who could only smell the air, lived out their lives in the back-lanes of Limerick.

"For one such poor person the Christmas of

1897 was to be his last. Stephen Keogh, (60) of Thomondgate, employed as a labourer by Messrs. Bannatyne and Sons, was admitted to Barrington's Hospital, after being kicked by a horse.

The *Limerick Weekly Echo* of Saturday 25 December, published a new story saying that the man had died in Hospital: "The unfortunate man never recovered consciousness and from the first but small hopes for his recovery were entertained," it stated.

Entertainment was high on the list of social activities that Christmas: The Earl and Countess of Dunraven, the Knight of Glin and Lady Rachel Fitzgerald had already arrived at Adare Manor where, according to the *Echo* files, a large shooting party was being entertained.

"During the Limerick Christmas of 1897 the rich and poor were for once united even if only through a word: entertained, a word, which for many, sums up the post-Christmas state."

The article then comments on the 1947 Christmas, which is fifty years after 1897, by saying that: *The Echo* of 27 December told of outstanding Christmas parties given at the American operating companies at Shannon.

"Of course many families went without the essentials of life that Christmas and the spectre of unemployment and emigration was about to be unleashed on the country, but women with short curled hair and long coats still found time to do last minute gift buying. . . little knowing what future years would present.

"Twenty-five years later we come to Christmas 1972. The Christmas which we will live through, and perhaps look back with a certain amount of sadness, on the people who came before us. Look back and feel horrified by their society which tolerated workhouses and crushed the God-given rights of unfortunate people. Who are we to judge? Let us look round at the society we have created. Are we proud? In a hundred years time, when people look back on our society, what will they say . . . ?"

Socialists have no need to wait one hundred more years to analyse what the 'Christmas spirit' is all about. Even the *Limerick Weekly Echo* must know that Christmas is deliberately and cold-bloodedly exploited by capitalism as the peak of the year's profit-making.

## THE MONTH'S MIND

Limerick Garda are still holding 28 people after a serious outbreak of writing during the New Year ceremony in the Chamber of Commerce. It is understood that obscene slogans, such as 'Money is Filthy' were written all over the place.

### NEW DISEASE

A case of a new disease, MacStiofianitis, broke out recently in Dublin. If not caught in the early stages, the disease necessitates two visits by Archbishops before it can be cured.

### SWEET AWARD

The 1972 Geary's Gobstopper Award for a significant contribution to public affairs has been won by Ald. Steve Coughlan, T.D. A spokesman however, was rather subdued, 'The man's mouth is already big enough,' he said.

### BEAR MISSED

LOST a teddy bear in Bedford Row over the Christmas. Reward to finder. Phone Ald. Pat Kennedy. Who missed it very much.

### VICIOUS RUMOURS

Two tallies dummies escaped from Burton's Shop yesterday and there is no truth in the vicious rumours that Council members Mick Kennedy and Frank Glasgow, were taken into custody by Gardaí last night.

### NEW SHOW

Behind the scenes, Cllr. Jack Bourke is hoping to present a new comedy act at the City Theatre called *The Tom and Paddy* show. Yes . . . Tom McDermott, City Manager, and Paddy Kiely, Mayor, in *Council Capers*, a show running at the Town Hall for the past six months.

### NO NEWS

A report in 'The Times' that Justice Minister Dessie O'Malley was planted in Limerick to mark Ireland's Europe entry has been described by the Government Information Bureau as 'having no roots in fact.'

### GUN LAW

FOUND: a machine-gun in Arthur's Quay. Owner can have same by applying to the Curragh Camp and paying cost of bail.

### ARREST DRAMA

Sen. William O'Brien, Co. Council chairman, was dramatically arrested by Gardaí last night. He was charged before a special coach with helping the C.I.E. Great Train Robber escape. 'I did it for Ireland,' he told the Judge.

### NO CLOTHES

A Planning application on behalf of four businessmen for a strip-club in Southill has been refused. 'The only things shed here will be unnatural aspirations,' said the Parish Priest.

### INDECENT SCENE

A man was taken into custody by Special Branch detectives for indecent over-exposure on R.T.E. He was later reported to be Paddy Devlin, M.P. who said 'he would protest about anything if he got paid a *Tew quid* or a *Limerick Ham*.'

### BIG JOKE

Limerick Traders have announced that Cllr. Clem Casey has been awarded the 'Chicken Joker Jingle' for the fifth successive year. 'He knows his Jays', said the spokesman.

### TREES-A-CROWD

Dozens of trees were planted in Limerick last week. 'They will indeed have Special Branches,' said Dessie O'Malley.

### DON'T QUIT

Following the success of his poetic Christmas message to his flock of beer-sharks and porter-brigade boys, Ald. Coughlan is now sending a New Year's exhortation to his former Clann na Poblachta colleagues titled: *DON'T QUIT!*

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